

NHS

Careers

Careers in the ambulance service

Join the team and
make a difference



Welcome to the NHS

The NHS offers a huge range of exciting and challenging opportunities for people who are passionate about making a difference.

With more than 300 different careers on offer, there is a job for you no matter what your interests, skills or qualifications.

What's more, you'll be given every opportunity to build on your skills and learn new ones as part of the Career Framework – a system that demonstrates our commitment to skills development. See the centre pages for more information about this.

Scientists, accountants, porters, psychologists, nurses, information technologists and estate managers, to name but a few, are all needed to ensure the smooth running of the NHS. These people, and many more, work together as a team to deliver the very best care for our patients.

To find out more about becoming a member of the NHS team, call 0345 60 60 655, email advice@nhscareers.nhs.uk or visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk

We look forward to hearing from you!

Contents

- | | | | |
|-----------|---|-----------|---|
| 2 | The NHS – a rewarding place to work
Benefits
Pay and conditions
Work-life balance | 12 | What opportunities are available?
Ambulance care assistants
Call handlers
Emergency care assistants
Emergency medical dispatchers
Paramedics
Patient transport services controllers
Senior paramedics |
| 6 | Your career in the ambulance service | 16 | Getting started
Trainee schemes
Graduate opportunities and approved courses
Work placements |
| 10 | Career Framework
Developing your career in the NHS | 19 | What's your next step? |

Foreword

In this booklet you'll learn about the exciting range of opportunities that today's ambulance service has to offer.

Healthcare is changing rapidly in response to modern needs, 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. There is also a team of people with different roles who provide the vital back-up, as well as the non-emergency patient transport service that is so valued by the community.

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, then the ambulance service is right for you. We offer a flexible working environment, excellent benefits and a wealth of opportunities to develop your career.

The NHS Careers team

For more information about working in the ambulance service, please visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/working

If you have any questions, call our helpline on [0345 60 60 655](tel:03456060655) or email advice@nhscareers.nhs.uk



The NHS – a rewarding place to work

There are few careers that are as rewarding as one in the NHS, or that give you the opportunity to work with such a variety of people.

We actively recruit people of all ages, backgrounds and levels of experience. This helps us understand the different needs of the patients we serve every day and provide the best possible service.

Whichever area you join, you become part of a talented, passionate team of people, committed to providing the best care and treatment to patients. You will also enjoy one of the most competitive and flexible benefits packages offered by any employer in the UK.

Benefits of working in the NHS

Everyone who joins the NHS is guaranteed a salary that matches their ability and responsibilities, and given every opportunity to increase it through training and development.

On top of your basic salary, you will receive at least 27 days' holiday each year, plus a range of other benefits including occupational health and counselling services.

Join one of the UK's best pension schemes

The NHS Pension Scheme is one of the most generous and comprehensive in the UK. Every new employee automatically becomes a member and you will get an excellent package of pension benefits, fully protected against inflation and guaranteed by the Government.

For more information about the pension scheme, and a full list of the benefits included, please visit

www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/payandbenefits

PAY AND CONDITIONS

The NHS pay system, known as Agenda for Change, offers real benefits for all directly employed staff except doctors, dentists and very senior managers, including:

- 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
- better career and pay progression based on the application of knowledge and skills
- annual personal development review to support career aspirations.

Other benefits of working in the NHS include training, occupational health services, automatic membership of the NHS Pension Scheme (unless you choose to opt out) and study leave for sponsored courses.

To find out more about the different Agenda for Change bands, and see the most up-to-date starting salaries for each one, go to www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/payandbenefits



FULFIL YOUR POTENTIAL

- The NHS is committed to offering development and learning opportunities for all full-time and part-time staff
- No matter where you start within the NHS, you'll have access to extra training and be given every chance to progress within the organisation
- You will receive an annual personal review and development plan to support your career progression
- As part of the Knowledge and Skills Framework, within Agenda for Change, you will be encouraged to extend your range of skills and knowledge and take on new responsibilities.

See the centre pages for more on the Career Framework and an example of how an employee has progressed through the NHS.

CASE STUDY

Name: Nick Sillett

Job title: paramedic with London Ambulance Service NHS Trust

Entry route: graduate in Paramedic Science from Hatfield University

Nick wanted to be a paramedic from a very early age. In fact, as a young child, he spent more time in the first aid section in his local pharmacy than the toy department. While at school, he also had the opportunity to do some work experience at an ambulance station, which confirmed his choice.

To be a good paramedic you need a variety of skills and attributes as well as the academic knowledge. As the work can be quite strenuous, a good level of physical fitness is important. You'll also need heaps of common sense, good communication skills, a sense of humour and patience. We spend a lot of time on the



road so driving ability and map reading skills are helpful.

In my opinion, a paramedic science degree is more demanding than most degrees, mainly due to the amount of time each element takes. While other students are on holiday, paramedic students are completing placements with the service, advanced driver training, manual handling and lifting assessments. During the summer break, there are several weeks of incident simulation to consolidate the learning throughout the year.

Being a 24 hour, 365 day service, all paramedics are expected to work both day and night shifts, which are generally 12 hours long. My day starts with a cup of tea and it is then a case of waiting for the first emergency call of the day. Working in London, we never normally have to wait long.

The best thing about my job is simple – the ability to help people. And it's not always the serious road traffic collisions or cardiac arrests that make this job so worthwhile. Sometimes it's simply helping an elderly person back into their chair after they have fallen over.

My best day? Easy. The first time I delivered a baby. Bringing new life into this world makes up for some of the ones that you can't save.

Helping you find the right work-life balance

The NHS is committed to maintaining a healthy work-life balance for all NHS staff. There is a real focus on specific areas that are designed to make your life easier at certain times during your career. These include:

- flexible working and flexible retirement
- childcare provision and support for carers in the workplace
- creating a healthier work environment
- training and development
- tackling discrimination, bullying and harassment.

You can find more information about the initiative and the plans for the future at www.nhsemployers.org/healthyworkplaces

Manage your commitments in and out of work

To be a successful member of the ambulance team it is likely you will be required to work unsocial shifts, including evenings, weekends and nights. However, the size and diversity of the NHS means we can offer you a range of flexible working opportunities.

Part-time roles and jobshare opportunities are often available, as well as term-time only, evening and weekend positions. We will do everything we can to help you combine your work for us with commitments in your everyday life – whether you’re studying for a new qualification, raising a family or have other responsibilities.

Many people take an extended break to look after young children or other dependants who need special care, or to study full time.

We will help you combine your work for us with commitments in your everyday life

As well as advice and support for people looking after sick or elderly relatives, we may be able to provide a range of childcare services for all NHS employees, including:

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

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



Your career in the ambulance service

The priority of the ambulance service is no longer simply getting patients to hospital as fast as possible. We now know that lives are saved by assessing and treating people at the scene of an accident or at the time of the medical emergency. This means highly-trained professionals carrying out life-saving procedures and giving drugs on the spot, sometimes under difficult conditions.

Members of the ambulance team are also taking on new roles, prioritising 999 calls, for example, and assessing and treating non-emergency patients in GP surgeries and in their own homes.

Before the accident and emergency crews take to the road, other members of the trained team take the

999 call, decide rapidly what action is needed and then ensure that it happens.

If the situation is critical, one of the control staff might have to talk a distressed caller through a life-saving procedure or collect more essential information as the ambulance travels to the scene.

However, the majority of ambulance journeys are non-emergency but absolutely vital to patients. 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.

Below you can learn more about the key roles in the ambulance service and where you might fit in.

Ambulance care assistants/Patient transport services (PTS) drivers

As an ambulance care assistant, you will drive patients to and from routine hospital admissions and other non-urgent healthcare appointments. You'll be responsible for looking after them on the journey and while they are being 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.

Call handlers

As a call handler you will answer 999 calls from the public and GPs. Working quickly and calmly, you'll take the essential details about the patient's condition and the exact location, logging them on to the computer system. This information is then passed on to an emergency medical dispatcher and then used to make important decisions about how best to handle the situation. As a senior call handler, you may have to talk a member of the public through procedures to resuscitate an unconscious patient or deliver a baby while the ambulance is on its way. Some employers combine the roles of call handler and emergency medical dispatcher.



CASE STUDY

Name: Beverley Dyer

Job title: emergency medical dispatcher, London Ambulance Service NHS Trust

Entry route: emergency medical dispatcher

When she became disabled, Beverley wanted to use her healthcare experience in a setting where her wheelchair was not a problem. She works as part of an ambulance control room team – a challenging and rewarding role.

I was a pharmacy technician when I became disabled and logistically it became difficult for me to carry on with that particular job.

I have no problem with my current role, however. I work shifts in a control room with about 40 call



handlers and emergency medical dispatchers. The call handlers pass the details of the emergency on to me. I phone the ambulance station and they tell me which crew is next out. If the crew is already in its vehicle then I'm directly in touch with them on the radio.

You get to know the voices of the crew members and although they are always very professional, you can tell by their tone when a situation is really serious. My job is to make sure they have all the information they need to get to the scene as quickly as possible and to give the patient the best treatment.

I'm also responsible for making sure that the crew stays safe. If a situation is volatile, I'll call the police. I might have to send the ambulance to a meeting point and tell the crew to stand by until it's safe to go in. However, I never forget there is someone out there needing help.

Call-taking can be difficult, particularly if the person on the phone is a close relative of the patient or if they're out on the street and don't know the exact address of the emergency. I might pinpoint the location by asking them to look for landmarks, such as pubs, schools or churches. The patient might be allergic to certain drugs or might be on medication that affects what they are allowed to have. The more information I can get, the better it will be for the crew and, of course, for the patient.

8 Careers in the ambulance service

Emergency care assistants

As an emergency care assistant you are a member of the emergency ambulance crew, answering 999 calls. You will work alongside a more qualified member of the ambulance team, giving support and help to enable them to provide patients with potentially life-saving care at the scene and getting patients to hospital as fast as possible. Working shifts and in all weathers, you will deal with a range of different people and situations.

Emergency medical dispatchers

As an emergency medical dispatcher you receive details of 999 calls requesting an ambulance on a computer screen. The information will have been collected by a call handler. Using your training to assess the type of emergency, you'll determine what response is needed and, if appropriate, send the nearest ambulance, rapid-response car, motorcycle or even paramedic helicopter to the scene. Some employers combine the roles of call handler and emergency medical dispatcher.

Paramedics

Paramedics have a highly responsible role, often being the senior ambulance service healthcare professional in a range of emergency and non-emergency situations. Working either on your own or with an emergency care assistant or student paramedic, you'll assess the patient's condition, make a decision on treatment and administer it where appropriate. 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.

Patient transport services (PTS) controllers

As a PTS controller, you'll be responsible for organising transport to take patients to and from outpatient clinics, routine hospital admissions and other non-urgent appointments. You will record information accurately and also make the best use of NHS vehicles and drivers.

Senior paramedics

The role of the senior paramedic is a developing one that offers new opportunities for paramedics. It is a more advanced role to a paramedic and may have a range of job titles, including emergency care practitioner. Perhaps working from a response car, or based in a GP surgery, minor injury unit, hospital emergency department or other setting, you will assess patients with certain symptoms and conditions, such as suspected fractures or chest pain. You will take a medical history, examine the patient and order tests and scans as necessary. You might then decide to give treatment yourself or to refer on to another healthcare professional. You'll have great scope for extending your role even further with more training and qualifications.

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.

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

- a willingness to work as a member of a team
- good communication skills
- good fitness and manual-handling skills for some roles
- excellent driving skills for some roles
- initiative
- decision-making skills
- a calm manner even when faced with aggressive or frightened people.

For more information about the qualifications needed to work in the ambulance service, visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/qualifications

CASE STUDY

Name: Graham Robinson

Job title: control manager, North East Ambulance Service NHS Trust

Entry route: ambulance care assistant

Graham has been offered, and accepted, several challenging promotions since joining the service as a care assistant. He now manages more than 100 control room staff.

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. It was a huge promotion and I couldn't turn it down.

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, another opportunity came up. We needed funding for an air ambulance and I was offered the post of general manager in charge of generating income. It was a big challenge but I made a success of it.

Ten years ago I got my present job of control manager – number three in the whole regional ambulance service. 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.

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.

The role of ambulance technician is now being replaced with emergency care assistant.

Career Framework

The Career Framework has been designed to improve career development and job satisfaction for NHS employees.

It encourages individuals to learn new skills and take on extra responsibilities that enable them to progress within the organisation. Many people take on

additional responsibility within their own area, while others retrain and move to different roles.

The case study on Graham Robinson describes how he has progressed within the ambulance service. While entry routes have changed during his career, the case study clearly describes his progression and

	Ambulance service professions	Allied health professions	Dental care professions	Healthcare science
9 More senior staff	Clinical director of service	Director of therapies		Director of regional genetics services
8 Consultant practitioners	Consultant paramedic	Consultant radiographer		Consultant clinical scientist (medical physics)
7 Advanced practitioners	Advanced paramedic	Specialist speech and language therapist		Specialist respiratory physiologist
6 Senior practitioners/ specialist practitioners	Specialist paramedic	Senior occupational therapist	Senior dental technologist	Senior biomedical scientist
5 Practitioners	Control room superintendent: supervising a control room that deals with all emergency calls, and overseeing radio dispatch of vehicles	Dietitian	Dental technician	Cardiac physiologist
4 Assistant practitioners/ associate practitioners	Ambulance technician*: responding to 999 calls and providing life-saving care as part of an emergency ambulance crew	Assistant clinical psychologist	Dental therapist	Critical care technologist
3 Senior healthcare assistants/technicians	Ambulance care assistant: caring for patients on a non-emergency ambulance	Rehabilitation assistant	Dental hygienist	Newborn hearing screener
2 Support workers	Patient transport service driver	Therapy clinical support worker	Dental nurse	Pharmacy dispensing assistant
1 Initial entry level jobs				

*The role of ambulance technician is now being replaced with emergency care assistant.

you can follow his career path in the white boxes on the diagram below, alongside other potential paths in the different areas of the NHS.

The diagram below gives an illustration of a variety of NHS careers and where they may fit on the Career

Framework. It is not exhaustive; details on other careers can be found in the relevant booklets and on the NHS Careers website.

Visit the NHS Careers website at www.nhs Careers.nhs.uk/list/working

Health informatics	Management	Midwifery	Nursing	Wider healthcare team
Director of information management and technology	Director of human resources	Director of maternity services	Director of nursing	
Pictures archiving communication manager	Associate director of children's services	Consultant midwife	Nurse consultant in stroke	
Clinical researcher	Control manager: area manager for the ambulance service with oversight responsibility for all control processes	Head of midwifery	District nurse (team manager)	Head of estates
Systems analyst	General manager community services: developing community-based emergency services including GP out-of-hours cover and local events cover	Community midwife	Community psychiatric nurse	Chaplain
Librarian	Payroll manager	Midwife	Neonatal nurse	Catering manager
Clinical coder	General office manager		Community care assistant	Medical secretary
Medical records clerk		Maternity support worker	Senior healthcare assistant	Security officer
Support desk assistant		Healthcare assistant (maternity)	Healthcare assistant (nursing)	Maintenance assistant
Health records assistant			Nurse cadet	Porter

What opportunities are available?

This section tells you more about the different key roles in the ambulance service to help you decide what area would suit you best.

You can find more detailed information about all the roles listed below on the NHS Careers website at www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/working

Ambulance care assistants

- In this role you will drive disabled, elderly, sick or vulnerable people to and from outpatient clinics, daycare centres and routine hospital admissions.
- 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 with a team of other assistants, you might work on your own or with another care assistant, depending on the type of vehicle you drive. 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. You might work on your own, driving a standard car to transport one or two able-bodied people at a time.
- As well as driving, you will also lift and help to move some of your patients in and out of the vehicle. You will make sure that they 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.
- Your other duties will include making sure that your vehicle is clean and tidy and keeping an accurate record of your journeys.

Call handlers

- 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.
- No two situations will be the same. You might be dealing with a life-or-death emergency, such as a multiple pile-up on a motorway, 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. Equally, you might need to persuade someone that they should visit their GP or emergency department rather than calling out an emergency ambulance.
- Your job will be to get all the essential information from the caller, who might be extremely anxious or panicking, as quickly and accurately as possible. Thinking fast, multi-tasking and using your initiative, you will often work under great pressure. 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 windpipe. Some ambulance services combine the call handler role with that of **emergency medical dispatcher**.

Emergency care assistants

- As an emergency care assistant you'll often work alongside a paramedic answering 999 calls. 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.
- No two shifts will be the same. You might be called out to a road accident victim with multiple severe injuries or to someone who has had a heart attack in a busy shopping centre. You could be transferring a very sick baby to a specialist centre, dealing with an elderly person who's fallen down the stairs or attending a case of domestic violence.
- 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 electric shock therapy to resuscitate patients with heart failure and will be trained to give a range of different drugs.
- Based at a local ambulance station or a large hospital as part of a team, you will work shifts, going out in all weathers at all hours, sometimes working in difficult conditions, such as in confined spaces or on a motorway following an accident.
- 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 brigade.

Emergency medical dispatchers

- As an emergency medical dispatcher you will be one of the first links in the emergency response chain. Based in a control room as part of a team with a supervisor, you will be passed details of 999 calls. Your responsibility is to send the nearest emergency ambulance to the scene as fast as possible with as much information as you can get.
- Your speed and accuracy could be literally a matter of life or death. While the crew is on its way, you will probably still be passing them further essential details so crew members 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**.

Paramedics

- To work as a paramedic in the NHS, you need to be registered with the Health Professions Council. You will be one of the first healthcare professionals to arrive at a range of emergency and non-emergency situations. You will probably be the senior member of a two-person ambulance crew, with an emergency care assistant to support you. However, you might work on your own, using a motorbike, emergency-response car or even a bicycle to reach your patients. With extra training, you could also be a member of an air ambulance crew.
- When you arrive at the scene of an emergency, you will assess the patient's condition and take potentially life-saving decisions about any treatment needed before the patient is transferred to hospital. You will then start giving the treatment, with the assistance of the ambulance technician. In non-life-threatening situations, you'll also have to use your professional judgement to make key clinical decisions.
- 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 or a large hospital along with other emergency crews, 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 doctors and nurses in hospital emergency departments, briefing them as you hand your patient over to their care.

14 Careers in the ambulance service

Paramedics continued

- As well as contact with your patients, you will also deal with patients' relatives and members of the public, some of whom might be hysterical or aggressive. You will also often work alongside the police and fire brigade.
- With further training and experience, you might take on one of the developing roles in the community. Here you could be based in one of a number of different settings, such as a GP surgery, minor injuries unit or hospital emergency department. You might need extra training and qualifications for this – see **senior paramedic**.

Patient transport services controllers

- As a patient transport services (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. You will book the vehicles that take patients to and from local clinics, daycare centres and non-emergency hospital admissions.
- Based in a central office as part of a team, you may work shifts involving some early mornings and evenings.
- 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 and then book the vehicle, probably using a computer. You will have to decide which type of vehicle is appropriate for each patient, depending on their mobility and state of health, and plan the trips in order to make the most efficient use of the vehicles and the drivers.
- As you deal professionally with queries from patients, clinics and drivers, you will work under pressure a lot of the time, thinking fast and multi-tasking. You will keep a running check on how the service is functioning and know the location of all the vehicles in your charge at all times.

Senior paramedics

- The role of senior paramedic is developing all the time in response to the needs of the modern NHS. You will be a paramedic, or a specialist nurse with additional skills and qualifications that allow you to carry out more treatments and take on more responsibility. You'll work in one of a wide variety of settings, such as GP surgeries, minor injury units, walk-in clinics and hospital emergency departments. You might also see patients in nursing or residential homes, schools or prisons. 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 make decisions with the agreement of your patients.
- If you are based at a GP surgery, you might see patients who come in with minor injuries such as cuts and suspected bone fractures, deciding whether to treat them yourself or refer them on to the GP or hospital. You might give flu vaccinations, take blood samples and carry out electrocardiograms (ECGs) on patients with possible heart problems.
- You could also see patients in their own homes, particularly people with poor mobility. If someone complains of chest pain, for example, you might visit them in a specially equipped car, take their medical history, carry out a full examination and record observations before deciding whether to refer them back to the GP or organising an emergency ambulance.

**For more information about roles in the ambulance service, visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/working.
To search for current jobs, visit www.jobs.nhs.uk**

CASE STUDY

Name: Emma Relf

Job title: critical care paramedic, South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust

Entry route: trainee ambulance technician

Emma has always enjoyed the buzz of being a paramedic but wanted to develop her skills, so jumped at the chance to train as a critical care paramedic.

I always wanted to do something medical and exciting which involved helping others, so becoming a paramedic seemed like the perfect career for me.

I started my career in the NHS as a call operator in the control room at my local ambulance service head quarters, 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.



However, I was keen to widen my skills and wanted further responsibilities and training.

At the time, the 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.

As well as carrying out the full range of usual ambulance duties and responsibilities, I also respond to life-threatening calls, such as cardiac arrests, serious falls and road traffic collisions. My specialist role allows me to assess and diagnose injuries and use more powerful drugs and equipment on the scene that, up until now, 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.

I work 12-hour shifts which are long and tough but I love the lack of routine and the fact that every day is different. Knowing I have made a positive difference to a person's life also makes the job worthwhile. The emotional and physical highs and lows of the job can be challenging but I work within a supportive team with a great sense of humour which sees me through those difficult days.

Getting started

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. There is on-the-job training for every role, so you can earn while you learn. There is also the chance to study for formal qualifications, including a degree. Below are some of your options and entry routes.

Trainee schemes

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 an NVQ or the equivalent, while others will also recruit people with a good general education and/or work experience.

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, you will have the chance to apply to become a registered paramedic, after experience and further training. You will have to pass entrance exams and fulfil additional selection criteria before being accepted on to a paramedic course.

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. If you passed your test after 1996, you will need an extra driving qualification to drive larger vehicles and carry passengers.

For more information on training in the NHS, visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/training

Graduate opportunities/approved courses

Over 20 universities offer courses approved by the Health Professions Council, leading to a diploma, foundation degree and/or BSc honours degree, which leads to registration in order to practise as a paramedic. The courses tend to be modular with flexible entry and exit points, depending on your academic qualifications and any relevant experience. With further study, for example, you can convert a foundation degree into an honours degree.

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 or other registered healthcare professional, 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 senior paramedic.

Speak to your careers advisor, call us on 0345 60 60 655 or email advice@nhscareers.nhs.uk to find out if you are eligible for these courses.

To find out more about graduate opportunities, visit www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/list/training

Funding

Funding arrangements vary from trust to trust. For on-the-job training, you will be paid a salary while you learn. For degree courses, you may get a salary while you are doing the practical placement part of the course. Some employers, but not all, will support you if you need the extra driving qualification.

Pay

Most jobs are covered by the Agenda for Change (AfC) pay scales. This pay system covers all staff except doctors, dentists and the most 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 services could start as an ambulance call taker or control assistant at AfC Band 2, or in a patient transport service role at Bands 2, 3 and 4. After appropriate training, if you

have worked as an emergency care assistant, you could typically be Band 4, with paramedics at Band 5 and the more specialist role of senior paramedic 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.

Work placements

Work placements offer an excellent chance to learn more about what the service has to offer and whether the career you are considering is for you. If you come in as a paramedic a work placement will be a key part of your training. For individual work placements, the number and type available vary depending on where you are in the country. For more information about opportunities in your area, please talk to your local ambulance trust.

For more information on pay bands in your chosen career visit

www.nhs.uk/list/payandbenefits

CASE STUDY

Name: Alan Brooks

Job title: paramedic clinical advisor, South Central Ambulance Service NHS Trust

Entry route: ambulance technician

Alan joined the ambulance service from nursing and spent several years as a paramedic. Having helped to set up a system for non-emergency 999 calls, he now uses all his clinical experience to run the system.

I trained as a nurse specialising in learning disability and ended up working with people with severe challenging behaviours. When I saw an advert for the ambulance service, I decided it was time for a change.

In nursing, I had a good idea what was going to happen every day. On the ambulance, no two jobs are the same: for example, you can have three patients with heart attacks and they'll all be different.

I started as a trainee ambulance technician and went on to train as a paramedic. As a paramedic you're allowed to do so much more than an ambulance technician. For example, you can give thrombolysis, which is drug

treatment for heart attacks caused by a blood clot, or carry out emergency airway puncture involving releasing air and blood from the chest with a fine needle to expand a collapsed lung. It's your decision whether these are needed.

Last year, after nine years as a paramedic, I was asked to help set up a new system for dealing with less urgent 999 calls. I knew I'd miss being on the ambulance but I thought it would be good to be in at the beginning of something, helping to shape it – I'd never done that before.

We have now gone live with the new system and it's working really well. The calls come through to me in the control room and I take the patient's medical history, find out what drugs they are on and ask any other relevant questions before making a final decision about where they need to go. You really have to rely on your communication skills, dragging out the information over the phone instead of dealing with people face to face.

I might decide they need an emergency ambulance after all, or I could send an ambulance at normal driving speed or advise the patient to see their GP or to visit an emergency department.

The role has grown quickly in a very short time and I'm now being used generally as a clinical resource for other calls and also by the ambulance crews calling in for advice. I'm sure it will develop even more in the future and I'm really pleased with the way it's going.

The role of ambulance technician is now being replaced with emergency care assistant.



What's your next step?

We hope you've found this booklet useful, and now have a better idea of whether a career in the ambulance service is right for you.

If you've decided you do want to work in this area, it's important to start planning ahead straight away. Find out as much information as you can about the qualifications you need and the opportunities that are available.

If you're considering becoming a paramedic, contact the Health Professions Council or the College of Paramedics, or use the course finder on the NHS Careers website to find out which universities and ambulance service trusts offer approved courses. For other roles, visit ambulance service trust websites to see what training they provide. Each university or trust will also be able to tell you what they look for in applicants. For example, getting

some work experience in care is an excellent way of showing your commitment and enthusiasm.

If you are already working but are thinking about a change of career, consider volunteering at your local ambulance service trust 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.

Whatever position you're in right now, the NHS Careers service can help. For more information please call 0345 60 60 655, email advice@nhs Careers.nhs.uk or visit www.nhs Careers.nhs.uk

To search for jobs, go to www.jobs.nhs.uk, and for more information about professional bodies visit www.nhs Careers.nhs.uk/list/contacts

Here are some things you can be doing, depending on where you are right now. For contact details, visit www.nhs Careers.nhs.uk/list/contacts

Where are you now?	What should you do now?	Who can help?
Studying for GCSEs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit www.stepintothens.nhs.uk and register for more information on chosen careers. • 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. • Consider the option of a 14-19 diploma in society, health and development. 	Subject teachers Your careers advisor/ Connexions service Professional bodies NHS Careers
Studying for A-levels or another course at your school or a local college	As GCSEs, plus: <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 a healthcare apprenticeship. 	Subject teachers Your careers advisor/ Connexions service UCAS NHS Careers Professional bodies NHS Jobs
At university	As A-levels	University careers service NHS Careers Professional bodies NHS Jobs
Looking for a new career	As A-levels, plus: <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. 	Careers/Connexions service (you may have to pay to use these services) NHS Careers Jobcentre Plus Professional bodies NHS Jobs UCAS

FOR FURTHER COPIES OF THIS BOOKLET PLEASE CONTACT:

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