

## PARAMEDIC

### WHAT DOES A PARAMEDIC DO?

Paramedics respond to medical emergencies: as the first healthcare professionals on the scene, they can deal with the aftermath of any situation, from a serious road accident or violent assault, to a heart attack or minor injury. Their duties typically include:

- Assessing the patient's condition.
- Starting any necessary treatment.
- Giving appropriate drugs or oxygen.
- Driving the ambulance.
- Recording information.
- Ensuring the ambulance and equipment are working properly.

They are usually part of a two-person ambulance crew with the other person being an ambulance technician or emergency care assistant. However, some work will be undertaken alone, using an emergency response car, motorbike or bicycle to get to a patient. Paramedics can become air ambulance crew members with additional training.

### SKILLS REQUIRED

Applicants for Paramedic courses and jobs will need to demonstrate that they have:

- a caring attitude and outgoing, helpful personality
- a responsible and highly motivated approach
- good interpersonal and teamwork skills
- strong oral and written communication skills
- excellent driving skills
- physical and emotional stamina
- good initiative and decision making skills
- a calm and reassuring approach
- good general fitness to cope with lifting patients and equipment

### QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED

- Registration with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC): to join the register, an applicant needs to complete a qualification approved by the HCPC that includes clinical placements with an ambulance service and other healthcare providers.
- Applicants can qualify as a paramedic, and become eligible for HCPC registration, in one of the following ways:
  - by completing a Foundation Degree or BSc in Paramedic Science or Paramedic Emergency Care (degree titles vary) that has been approved by the HPC (<http://www.hpc-uk.org/>). Applicants with paramedic experience can also apply for a Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE) course;
  - by applying for a student paramedic post offered by some NHS ambulance trusts, and studying whilst learning on the job. A list of NHS ambulance trusts is available at: <http://www.nhs.uk/ServiceDirectories/Pages/AmbulanceTrustListing.aspx>
- Because the job involves constant travel, a driving licence is essential. Some ambulance services require staff to hold a licence to drive heavier vehicles.
- Applicants will need to pass a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.
- Check entry requirements and course content with individual course providers.

### UNDERGRADUATE COURSES

For new entrants to the Paramedic role, there are 9 undergraduate Paramedic courses in the West Midlands that have been approved by the HPC:

- Foundation Degrees are offered at the University of Worcester (<http://www.worcester.ac.uk/>), Coventry University (<http://www.coventry.ac.uk/>) and Staffordshire University (<http://www.staffs.ac.uk/>)
- Diplomas of Higher Education are offered at Birmingham City University (<http://www.bcu.ac.uk/>), Coventry University (<http://www.coventry.ac.uk/>) and the University of Wolverhampton (<http://www.wlv.ac.uk/>)

- a BSc (Hons) degree is offered at Birmingham City University (<http://www.bcu.ac.uk/>)

An example of each course type is given below.

**Foundation Degree in Paramedic Science:** University of Worcester (<http://www.worcester.ac.uk/>)

**Length of study:** 2 years full-time

**Entry requirements - qualifications:** All potential students are required to have a minimum of 5 GCSEs at grade C or above (or a suitable equivalency) to include Maths and English. Where potential students do not possess GCSE or suitable equivalency in Maths and English subjects, equivalency testing opportunities are made available to the candidate if they wish to take this option (Please note this will incur a cost to the candidate).

Applicants with an *Access to HE Diploma* need to obtain 60 units in total from a recognised Access to HE Diploma in health or nursing. This must be made up from: 15 credits at Level Two and 45 Credits at Level Three. Applicants with a BTEC can see detailed requirements at <http://fd.ucas.com/>

**Entry requirements - work experience:** Applicants must be able to demonstrate a range of experience in an adult care setting: this may be on a paid or voluntary basis and should comprise of approximately 6 months full-time relevant work experience, or 12 months part-time relevant work experience.

**Diploma of Higher Education in Paramedic Science:** Birmingham City University

(<http://www.bcu.ac.uk/>)

**Length of study:** 1 year full-time

**Entry requirements – qualifications:** Evidence of Literacy and Numeracy (minimum of GCSE A\* to C in Maths and English, or Adult Training Scheme key skills level 2 in literacy and numeracy). Whilst not essential, it would be beneficial for applicants to possess a full clean UK manual driving licence and, where possible, have a provisional CI entitlement added to their licence.

**Entry requirements – work experience:** Must be working as an Ambulance Technician/ Trainee Paramedic.

**BSc (Hons) Paramedic Science:** Birmingham City University (<http://www.bcu.ac.uk/>)

**Length of study:** 3 years full-time

**Entry requirements - qualifications:** Applicants with an *Access to HE Diploma* in a Health and Social Care subject should have a full award (60 credits) of which a minimum of 45 must be at Level 3 including 24 at Merit or Distinction, of which a minimum of 18 must be in a science or health-related subject; plus 15 at Level 2 which must include Mathematics and English Language GCSE equivalents if they do not already have these two subjects at GCSE. Entry requirements for BTEC students are shown on the university webpage for this course.

**Entry requirements - work experience:** None specified.

**NB** Please check entry requirements with individual course providers.

## EMPLOYMENT SECTORS

Paramedics are employed by NHS ambulance services, the Armed Forces, private hospitals, private ambulance services and a few major industries such as oil and gas exploration companies.

There is also the option of working for private paramedical agencies for occasions such as sporting fixtures, major events or on film and TV sets. Other opportunities exist as first-aid instructors and health and safety trainers.

## WORKING CONDITIONS

The emergency ambulance service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Paramedics usually work 37.5 hours a week, including some night and weekend shifts, and bank holidays. Part-time hours are often also available. Paramedics wear a uniform, which includes protective clothing such as a bright jacket and safety boots.

Emergency calls may take a Paramedic to any environment. Though primarily based in an ambulance, Paramedics also spend time in hospital units and other healthcare settings. Increasingly, Paramedics are working in patients' homes.

## SALARY

NHS salaries can range from £21,692 to £34,876 per year. Additional allowances may be paid to staff in certain parts of the country and to those working on standby or in shift patterns.

**NB** These figures are only a guideline: see NHS pay scales, and job advertisements, for up-to-date information

## LABOUR MARKET DATA

In February 2016, there were 22,096 Paramedics registered with the HCPC. Most work for NHS Ambulance Services, and they are usually committed to having at least one Paramedic on each emergency ambulance. Job opportunities are therefore generally good, but the number of vacancies varies between

UK regions.

**PROFILE OF CURRENT WORKFORCE** (Figures are for the whole healthcare support sector)

Full-time (57%); Part-time (34%); Self-employed: (9%)

**INFORMATION SOURCES**

- College of Paramedics: <https://www.collegeofparamedics.co.uk/>
- Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC): <http://www.hpc-uk.org/>
- Health Learning and Skills Advice Line: 08000 150 850
- National Careers Service: <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/>
- NHS Careers: <http://www.nhs-careers.nhs.uk/>
- Paramedic Resource Centre: <http://www.paramedic-resource-centre.com/>
- Prospects: <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/>
- UCAS: <https://www.ucas.com/>

**VIDEO CLIPS**

- <http://www.nhs-careers.nhs.uk/explore-by-career/ambulance-service-team/careers-in-the-ambulance-service/paramedic/>
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-tyne-27688733>

**ASSOCIATED ROLE: EMERGENCY CARE ASSISTANT**

**Role:** Emergency Care Assistants (ECAs) drive ambulances under emergency conditions and support the work of Paramedics. They help to safely transfer patients to and from ambulance vehicles, using suitable equipment and manual handling skills; help Paramedics deal with urgent hospital admissions; help to complete a handover report, recording all patient information; make sure their vehicle is roadworthy, properly kitted out and cleaned (paying particular attention to infection prevention) after every call.

**Entry requirements:** Each NHS ambulance trust sets its own entry criteria, and arranges for local training, so potential applicants need to contact any ambulance trusts that they would like to work for. A list of NHS ambulance trusts is available at:

<http://www.nhs.uk/ServiceDirectories/Pages/AmbulanceTrustListing.aspx>

NHS ambulance trusts usually look for a minimum of 3-4 GCSEs (A\*-C) including English, Maths and a Science; a full UK manual vehicle driving licence; excellent driving skills and up-to-date knowledge of the highway code; good fitness levels and good eyesight (prescription glasses are acceptable). Some ambulance services may also require applicants to have a current first aid certificate and experience of working in a patient care setting, ideally within the NHS. A full Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check will be carried out on potential recruits.

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