



Paramedics in Primary Care.

Background

Paramedics have been working in primary care for some time. Increased pressure and demand on primary care services have been a catalyst for more opportunities for Paramedics to work in this environment. Initially practices were incentivised to establish Minor Injury Units and these were staffed by Nurse Practitioners and Paramedics that had minor injury training. It was then highlighted that some Paramedics could fulfil a wider brief.

As Specialist Paramedics were developed within the Ambulance service, they were educated and experienced in dealing with minor injuries and illnesses and could complete episodes of care autonomously and safely discharge or refer patients at scene.

This led to practices expanding the minor injuries clinics into same day service clinics. Paramedics would staff the clinics and could adapt to reduced appointment times thus increasing the same day appointments available to practice patients.



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Recruitment of Paramedics in primary care is increasing and formal guidance, a framework of support and an accredited pathway would offer significant benefits and support to employers, Paramedics and patients.

- This guide has been created to highlight the benefits employing a Paramedic can offer and to provide a level of formal guidance and support for employers recruiting a Paramedic.
- The Primary Care Workforce Centre is currently supporting work that is underway to develop an accredited education pathway for Paramedics working in primary care.
- The Primary Care Workforce Centre is creating a development framework for Paramedics working in primary care to support their continuing professional development and the quality of care provided.

Benefits of a Paramedic in Primary Care

Clinically, Paramedics are generalists in the sense that they can support any patients they are called out to. Consequently they will be able to see a broad range of practice patients.

Those that have worked in the Ambulance Service will bring a wealth of experience in conducting home visits.

Specialist Paramedics and especially newer qualified ones will have had education and experience in telephone triage.

Paramedics are registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).

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What qualifications to look for when recruiting a paramedic?

Traditionally entry to the Paramedic profession was with an Institute of Healthcare Development Certificate. The College of Paramedics are making it mandatory for entry to the profession to be set at BSc level in the near future and most newly registered Paramedics will have this level education.

Specialist Paramedics, formerly called Emergency Care Practitioners, will be experienced Paramedics educated to BSc, post-graduate Cert or Diploma level. The College of Paramedics stipulate post-graduate diploma level as a minimum.

Advanced Paramedics will be educated to MSc level and practicing at a high clinical level.

What support and development is required?

The support and development a Paramedic working in primary care needs will very much depend on their clinical grade and experience.

Basic Paramedic grades may need education and training in consultation skills, risk stratification, time management etc but also in areas such as interpreting blood results, dermatology, sexual health, palliative and end of life care and mental health.

Specialist Paramedics may need support in some of these areas but to a lesser extent and Advanced Paramedics will need lesser still depending on their experience.

The Primary Care Workforce Centre are working with South West Ambulance Service and Bournemouth University to establish and education and training programme for Paramedics in primary care.

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Studies into the impact of Specialist Paramedics working in healthcare environments other than the Ambulance Service.:

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Mason, S., O’Keeffe, C., Knowles, E., Bradburn, M., Campbell, M., Coleman, P., stride, C., O’Hara, R., Rick, J. and Patterson, M. (2010) A pragmatic quasi-experimental multi-site community intervention trial evaluating the impact of emergency care practitioners in different UK health settings on patient pathways (NEECaP Trial). *Emergency Medicine Journal*. 29. pp. 47-55. doi: 10.1136/emj.2010.103572.

O’Hara, R., O’Keeffe, C., Mason, S., Coster, J. and Hutchinson, J (2010) Quality and safety of care provided by emergency care practitioner. *Emergency Medicine Journal*. 29. pp. 327-332. doi: 2010.104190.

O’Keeffe, C., Mason, S., and Knowles, E. (2013) Patients experience of an extended role in healthcare: comparing emergency care practitioners with usual providers in different emergency and urgent care settings. *Emergency Medicine Journal*. 4(31). pp. 673-674. doi: 10.1136/ememed2013.

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