

"The best part of my job is knowing I have made a very nervous patient feel at ease by getting the right help for them."

Rita puts her nursing and paramedic training to good use in her job as team leader in an emergency operations centre, and is proud of the difference the role makes.

Rita Bains

Emergency clinical advice and triage centre team leader, emergency operations centre

Employer or university

East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust

Salary range

£25k-£35k



- **How I got into the role**

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I aspired to be a nurse from a very young age as I wanted to help people. I qualified in 1998 as a registered general nurse and, while working in a hospital, I did bank shifts in A&E to gain wider experience. Being exposed to the paramedic role and liaising with paramedics and technicians made me realise I wanted to be one too. In my culture, paramedic is not seen as a traditional role, unlike doctor, so I had to convince my mother this was a rewarding job. I'm happy to say I proved her wrong!

I attended the University of Hertfordshire to complete the foundation degree in paramedic science and qualified in 2006. I started my paramedic career first on an ambulance before moving on to a fast response vehicle.

In 2010 I decided to go back to nursing, but I soon missed the buzz of the ambulance service. So I applied to be a nurse adviser within ambulance control and have never looked back!

- ### **What I do**

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I have an overview of any calls waiting for an ambulance response, and deal with any clinical queries from the emergency operations centre staff or from clinicians based in the clinical hub.

I also manage a team of clinicians - nurses, paramedics and emergency care practitioners - across the three emergency operations centres within the trust.

- ### **The best bits and challenges**

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The best part of my job is knowing I have made a very nervous patient feel at ease by getting the right help for them. Having a general chat with them about our day, I suppose, goes both ways too! I miss the face-to-face element though.

The challenge is that unfortunately there's a lack of awareness and a huge misconception about my role, both from the public and our colleagues on the road. People often don't realise what goes on behind the scenes and the difference we make.

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Life outside work
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When I worked as a paramedic, I was constantly on the go and that kept me physically fit. My current role keeps my mind active, but I miss the physical aspects. In my spare time, I attend the gym three times a week to help me maintain a healthy work-life balance.

Being a lone parent with two young children (aged two and four) and working full time keeps me on my toes. My daughter is inspired to become a paramedic and every time she sees an ambulance she says: "Mummy used to drive ambulances and I want to help people too".

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Career plans and top tips for others
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My qualifications, experience and determination have helped me get where I am today. I am very proud of my achievements, especially with my paramedic qualification as I found the course challenging and very demanding. But I never gave up and always had the end goal in sight.

Communication skills are a must too in this role, both spoken and listening. Building, and maintaining, a rapport with a patient from the moment we answer the phone to the end of the call is paramount.

Recently, I completed a black and minority ethnic leadership course with the NHS

Leadership Academy. This helped me develop skills so I can progress into leadership. I am planning to complete an in-house management course too in the next few weeks. I am extremely lucky to be working with a management team who are very supportive in realising our potential and continually encourage our professional development.

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