

Real-life story - Gareth Ward

Gareth started his career as a support worker many years ago. Fast-forward to now, he's doing an advanced clinical practitioner Master's degree apprenticeship.



Gareth Ward Trainee advanced paramedic / trainee advanced clinical practitioner

Employer or university Hathaway Medical Centre

Salary range Unknown

How I got into the apprenticeship

I began my career as a support worker working with adults with learning difficulties. I've always wanted to be a paramedic from an early age and knew it would be good to gain some life experience.?

I went to Bournemouth University and got my foundation degree in paramedic science in 2011. I worked in Bournemouth for a few years in various roles, then moved to Wiltshire to further my career and spent a few years working as a Lead paramedic.

After that I took an emergency practitioner module at the University of the South West. As part of this, I did a placement in a GP practice. I really enjoyed the variety and responsibility this brought. I then started working at a local GP centre, and then started my advanced clinical practitioner apprenticeship at Master's level.??

What I do

A typical day involves seeing 30 patients in 12.5-minute slots for same day appointments. Working at an advanced practice level allows me to request different pathology and radiology requests to see the patient journey through. I can also make referral to specialities so it's really exciting to see if your working

diagnosis was correct! I haven't done the prescribing element of my course yet, which means the GPs have to sign all my scripts.?

There's a myth about paramedics in primary care being a glorified house visiting service. But with proper training, we can be an essential part of the team as we are very dynamic and manage risk well. I was the first paramedic to be employed at the GP practice where I did my placement, and I managed to champion the role. Now there are three of us!?

Every day is a learning day and I am fortunate enough to work with some excellent and knowledgeable clinicians.

The best bits and challenges

The apprenticeship gives me protected study time which fits in well with my busy home life (twins and a 1-year-old!) and it also allows me protected time to spend time with other specialities.?

I am most proud of the fact that with dyslexia, I am still able to pass modules at Master's level and I am in a position where I am championing the role of paramedic within primary care. Every day is a learning day and I am fortunate enough to work with some excellent and knowledgeable clinicians.

There is high patient demand, with high expectations from patients too. Sometimes it can be challenging to do an in-depth assessment in 12.5-minutes, especially for patients with acute presentations that may need admission. Whilst you are looking after a patient in that sort of situation, your list of other patients to see gets longer!?

Life outside work

My two main hobbies are playing drums and football though I am better at the drums than football! I go to a CrossFit class which is vital for burning off any stress at the end of my working day. To maintain a healthy work-life balance, I think it's important to talk, leave work at the door and exercise.

I have recently set up an advanced clinical practitioner network for Wiltshire to enable peer support and training for local people. I am excited to see how it will progress.?

Career plans and top tips for others

If you like responsibility, clinical autonomy and learning, this role is for you. We encompass four main advanced practice pillars: leadership, clinical, education and research. Every day is a learning day and you have the opportunity to really make a difference to patients. You are well respected in the clinical team and you can work within primary care [1], secondary care [2] or a bit of both!

You have to be a very effective communicator to take precise medical histories quickly and make quick-thinking decisions. At the same time, it's important not to fix on a diagnosis without proper investigation and most importantly know your limitations.?

Sometimes the 12.5-minute patient slots can be a challenge but it's important that you treat patients with compassion and utilise active listening skills. It's also important to accept that working in primary care

means not knowing everything and that there are lots of people and specialties to help!??

?

Source URL: <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/roles-allied-health-professions/paramedic/real-life-story-gareth-ward>

Links

[1] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Primary_care

[2] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Secondary_care