

An MSPs Guide to Paramedicine in Scotland

Paramedics are one of Scotland's most agile and skilled clinical workforces.

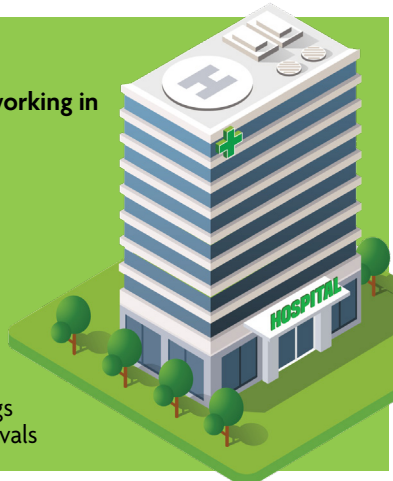
Paramedics are **highly trained, registered healthcare professionals** regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). They provide lifesaving emergency, urgent and specialist care across healthcare, social care, and in the community.

Not everyone who works on an ambulance is a paramedic, but every paramedic is a qualified clinician.

Where do paramedics work?

Scotland has over 2,150 paramedics working in a wide variety of healthcare settings:

- 999 and ambulance response
- Emergency departments
- GP practices
- Urgent and primary care
- Community and home-based care
- Palliative and end of life care
- Frailty services
- Police custody
- Military
- Remote, offshore and island settings
- Major events, motorsport and festivals



Scotland has five universities delivering paramedic degrees:

- University of Stirling
- Queen Margaret University
- Glasgow Caledonian University
- University of the West of Scotland
- Robert Gordon University

Programmes are a minimum of BSc delivered over 3 years' combining academic learning with practice-based learning. Scotland has one national ambulance service, The Scottish Ambulance Service.

Why paramedics matter

A paramedic works autonomously as a generalist clinician across a range of healthcare settings, usually in emergency, primary or urgent care. They may also specialise in clinical practice, education, leadership, or research.

Paramedics:

- Diagnose and treat patients
- Manage complex conditions
- Decide who needs hospital care, and who can safely stay at home
- Prescribe and administer medicines listed in law



Paramedics Delivering in Scotland — Case Studies —

Western Isles – Advanced Paramedic Practitioners

Advanced practitioners in the Western Isles split their time between ambulance response and NHS Western Isles.

They:

- Carry out home and care-home visits
- Support GP referrals
- Treat patients in police custody
- Deliver palliative care
- Run virtual ward services

Thousands of island patients have been treated, with many not needing hospital referrals, keeping people at home and reducing pressure on mainland services.

Special Operations Response Team (SORT)

Scotland's Special Operations Response Team (SORT) are specialist paramedics trained to work in the most dangerous and complex environments.

They respond to:

- Terrorist attacks
- Confined spaces
- Chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear incidents
- Water, height and environmental rescues

They attend around 9,000 incidents a year, delivering care when no other clinicians can safely reach patients.

Dumfries & Galloway – GP Home Visits

Paramedics across Dumfries & Galloway have supported GP home visits since 2018.

This model:

- Reduces travel for vulnerable patients
- Increases GP capacity
- Prevents hospital admissions
- Improves continuity of care

It allows GPs to focus on surgery patients while knowing people at home are receiving high-quality clinical care.



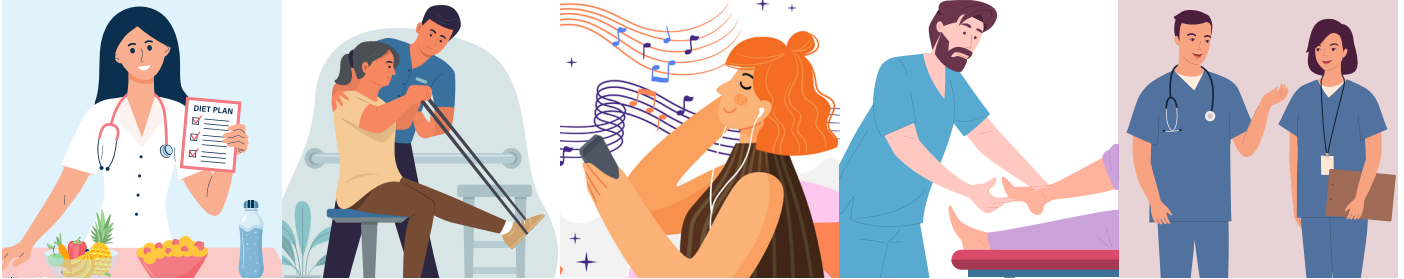
Paramedics are already:

- Treating people closer to home
- Supporting GP and hospital capacity
- Delivering care in rural, island, and remote areas
- Improving emergency and major incident responses

Paramedics are part of the Allied Health Professions (AHPs) in Scotland. The AHP workforce is the third largest within NHS Scotland.

AHPs are:

- Art Therapists
- Dietitians
- Dramatherapists
- Music Therapists
- Occupational Therapists
- Orthotists
- Orthotists and Prosthetists
- **Paramedics**
- Physiotherapists
- Podiatrists
- Radiographers
- Speech and Language Therapists.



The Royal College of Paramedics calls on policy makers to:

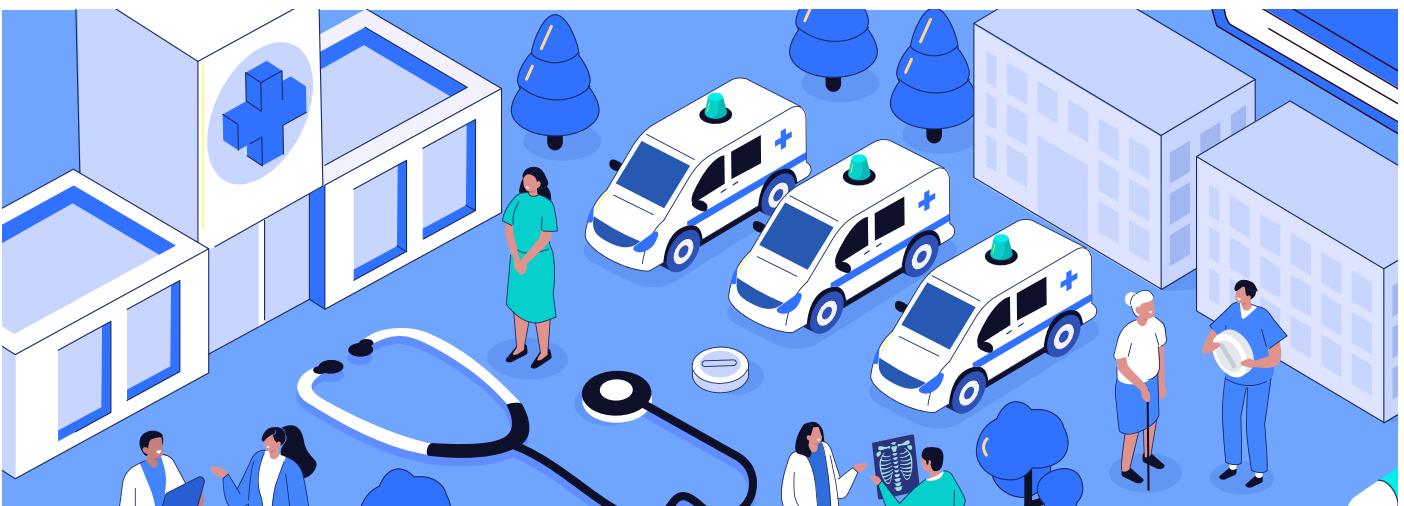
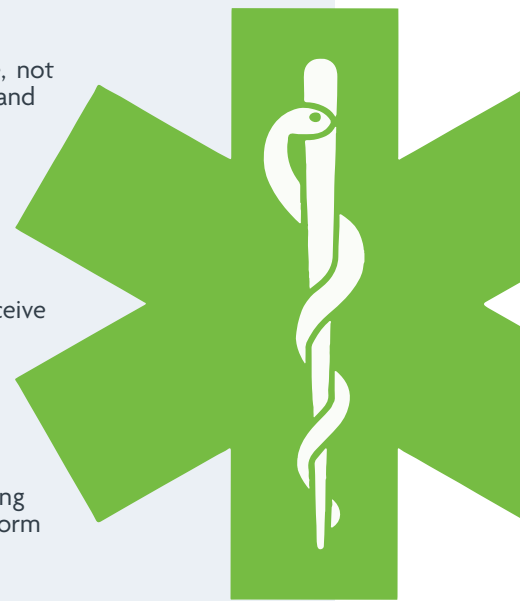
Recognise paramedics as autonomous clinicians within Scotland's healthcare workforce, not solely as ambulance responders, and reflect this in national workforce, primary care and community care planning.

Embed paramedics more fully within primary, urgent and community care services, including GP practices, frailty pathways, palliative care and virtual wards, to support earlier intervention and reduce avoidable hospital admissions.

Invest in advanced and specialist paramedic roles, particularly in rural, island and remote communities, to improve equity of access to healthcare and enable more people to receive care closer to home.

Integrate paramedics into national strategies addressing ageing populations, long-term conditions and preventative care, recognising their ability to manage complex cases and support people safely at home.

Measure and report the system-wide impact of paramedic-led models of care, including reductions in ED pressure, community GP workload and hospital conveyance, to inform evidence-based policy and long-term service design.



The Royal College of Paramedics is the only recognised professional body for the paramedic profession. We support the profession by providing leadership and advice to our members, and to people considering joining the ambulance professions. We provide support and leadership across the four pillars of the profession: research, education, clinical practice, and leadership.

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