



**Scottish
Ambulance
Service**
Taking Care to the Patient

NHS
SCOTLAND

how do I become an...

EMERGENCY CALL HANDLER



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**This is a role where you
can make a real difference
to patients and carers.**”

What is the role of an Emergency Call Handler?

Our Emergency Call Handlers are critical in enabling us to provide life-saving advice and clinical assistance. They are the very first link in patient care by registering emergency calls and giving reassurance that help is on its way.

We use a system to prioritise each call as well as providing first aid advice when appropriate.

Why should I become an Emergency Call Handler?

Our call handlers make sure that people get the right help, when they need it, often when they are at their most distressed and vulnerable. This is a role where you can make a real difference to patients and carers, by handling their call with professionalism and dignity.

What skills will I need to become an Emergency Call Handler?

You will need to type quickly and accurately, with a minimum typing speed of 30 words per minute. At the pre-selection stage, you will go through a series of PC, audio and call simulation tests.

You will also need to have excellent communication skills, be able to prioritise and make decisions quickly, often under great pressure. You will need to be able to concentrate and stay focused for long periods of time. Many calls last only a few minutes, and at busy times they can be constant, so you will need to be as focused at the start of your shift as you are at the end of it.

What training will I receive?

You will be given a full in-house training programme developed specifically for the role. This will enable you to become a certified call taker. Initially

you will complete an induction week, followed by three weeks of classroom training interspersed with buddying over a period of 10 weeks. After this you can begin to work alone. The National Academy of Emergency Dispatch also requires you to undergo 24 hours of continuous educational development every two years, in order to re-certify as an Emergency Call Taker.

What options are there for career progression?

Often our call handlers decide that they would like to develop their career. They may progress within the control room, to become a medical dispatcher and then on to a control room supervisor. Alternatively, they might move to one of our clinical emergency roles.

Moving into a clinical emergency role means applying for a vacancy on our Ambulance Technician programme. Here, you will complete our vocational qualification in order to become a qualified Ambulance Technician.

To find out more about a career with us, how to apply, and what skills we are looking for, visit our website at www.scottishambulance.com or find us on Twitter or Facebook



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EMERGENCY CALL HANDLER

Why did you become an Emergency Call Handler?

I used to work in a hotel, but the job wasn't for me. I knew that I wanted to do something that made a difference. I also knew that I didn't want to go out on the road, so when I saw the advert for a control room position it seemed the perfect answer.

Tell us about a typical day?

There isn't one. Every day and every call is different. We do get patterns in the types of calls we receive at different times of the day, week and year. For example, during the day, we get lots of calls from GPs requesting ambulances to take patients to hospital but there's always something unexpected.

What do you like best about your job?

Say one day you take a call from a really distressed caller, whose husband is having a heart attack. You take all the information, calm the caller down and pass it through to have an ambulance dispatched. Usually, you stay on the phone until the crew arrive, so you know that someone is there helping. Later, someone from dispatch comes through to let you know that the crew made it in time to be able to help, and that the person was taken to hospital and has successfully recovered – that's what I like about my job. Those are the days that you know you have made a difference.

Is it always this positive?

We are dealing with people in very distressing situations and they don't always behave rationally. We have to just keep calm and stay professional, but it's not always easy. We have a great team though and we help each other through those days.

What's next for you?

I have just applied to become a medical dispatcher. They work next to us in the control room and are responsible for making sure the right assistance gets to the patient as well as still taking calls when volumes are particularly high. It is a more complex job and it would develop the skills I have already learnt as a call handler and would be a promotion for me. But it means I can stay within the control room and continue being involved with the front line service.



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You need to be confident, able to take control, organised and able to keep calm under pressure. There are times when it is a really hard job, but the reward that you get, knowing you make a difference, is what really matters.

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