

Your future in STEM: A-Z

Where might **science** take you?

Please can you introduce yourself and tell us a bit about your job?

My name is Ken and I'm a paramedic in the London Ambulance Service as a member of the Hazardous Area Response Team. This is a small team with only six people on duty every hour each day. Our job is to provide specialist medical care in environments or scenarios where provision of care may be dangerous, difficult or problematic to other medical staff.

My role varies - it may involve assisting others on things such as such height and confined spaces, or supporting organisations where firearms, explosives or dangerous substances (chemical, biological and radiological) may be present. I'm trained to work in or around water and must be able to provide swift water rescue capabilities too. I also aid

major incidents and provide pre-hospital emergency medical care if required, as well as providing safe transport for people with viral haemorrhagic fevers such as Ebola if that is needed.

No day is the same as we can never foresee what events or incidents may happen. I need to react immediately to any task I have been assigned. At the start of every shift, I check the equipment thoroughly to ensure it will operate effectively and I can do my job safely. Some of our equipment includes ropes, harnesses, breathing apparatus, dry suits, medical kits, medicines and specialist communications technology such as thermal imaging or night vision. I also work closely alongside other organisations such as the Police, Fire Brigade, Royal National Lifeboat Institution, The Military, The London Air Ambulance and Local Authorities.

Tasks which I have performed in recent weeks include assisting in



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is for
Paramedic

the rescue of patients trapped on the Thames foreshore

(I had to work quickly as the tide was coming in); providing care to patients involved in road traffic collisions; incidents involving trains; assisting with the national COVID-19 response and helping to setup of the Nightingale hospitals; assisting the Police with firearms incidents; supporting the London Fire Brigade with fire related calls; and dealing with patients who have required care while at height, such as industrial accidents.

How did you get into this line of work?

I fell into by accident after seeing an advert in the local paper – there was an advert to join the London Ambulance Service and I thought it sounded interesting, so I went ahead and joined. ►



What qualifications did you study, or what experience did you gather to enable you to become a paramedic?

The role of a paramedic requires many skills, qualifications and abilities. At present, you can study Paramedic Science at Degree, Master's or even Consultant level. You will also need to be able to drive large vehicles and prove a high level of driving competency before you can respond to any calls on "Blue lights". There are also many other courses that you can do to increase your ability to provide pre-hospital medical care too.

Are there any particular science practical's, teachers or other moments in schools you fondly remember to this day?

Back then I didn't know I was going to have a career in the London Ambulance Service, so I don't have anything relating to my career, but what I do remember fondly from School



was the School Farm and how I used to love taking the cows for a walk alongside the football pitches.

recognising the contributions that everyone can make, irrespective of background.

How has studying Science at school prepared you to become a paramedic?

I've always believed that a good basic knowledge of all the sciences allows you to learn more effectively, and this is especially true to be a paramedic. You need biology to know about the human body, chemistry for any medicines you handle and physics to understand the equipment you're using.

Were there any moments or events that inspired you and led you down this path, either as a child, a student or since entering work?

Before I saw the advert in the local paper, I didn't have any inclination that I would be following this career and enjoying it for twenty years. I suppose this just goes to show that it's often a good idea to remain flexible in your options and be ready to pursue different paths as your interests and outlooks develop.

Were there any obstacles or factors that put you off this route at any point?

Not really. If anyone is considering a career as a paramedic, they can be confident that they will receive support and encouragement along the way. ►

How has your line of work changed to when you first started as a paramedic to now?

Pre-hospital medicine is advancing rapidly, and it's very exciting to be involved in this. Advances in technology and medicine means more can be done in the initial stages of an incident. In fact, the rate of progress and new developments can be startling at times. The modern Ambulance Service and the NHS in general has always been at the forefront of





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What was the reaction from friends and family when you shared your desire to become a paramedic?

My family and friends' reactions were very Positive. When you tell people you're a paramedic in the Hazardous Response team, they're very supportive of your line of work. People are genuinely interested in what I do and there is a lot of public support for the role. It's great to be such a respected member of the community.

What advice would you give to someone thinking about going into the same line of work as you?

Keep studying at all opportunities. There are so many ways to study available now so there is no excuse.

What advice would you give to others thinking about a career in STEM?

If you have an interest, then go for it. There will always be demand in this sector and you will have access to a wide variety of career paths on an international scale.



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