



# My Career Story

Maria Smith

Head of Professional Education and Apprenticeships  
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**My interest and passion to become a Paramedic started well before I applied. When I was 13 I saw an Air Ambulance and from that moment I knew that was the direction I wanted to pursue.**

However, in those days to join the ambulance service you had to be 21 and it was direct entry with in service training and residential training. There was no Paramedic Degrees at that time although they were in discussion and development. This was I thought my career for life, treating patients at the road side, in their homes, life and death, blue lights, both illness and injuries to treat.

In 2001, I joined the London Ambulance Service (LAS) as a Trainee Qualified Ambulance Technician and after passing my millers exam I became a Qualified Ambulance Technician working mostly in South West, West and Central London. I was stationed at Feltham Ambulance Station, which if you don't know is right next to Heathrow airport. Not the best place to be when you have a fear of flying and attending Full Emergencies at the Airport airside waiting for the impending airplane to land who had declared a full emergency landing. Concorde was a real treat every time it took off though!

I was still determined that my path was to ultimately become a Paramedic, I had to wait until I had 3 years experience before applying. So to the day, 3 years later in 2004 I further trained to become a Registered

Paramedic. I worked across London in various stations, getting to witness the best and worst of society whilst having access to areas of London rarely seen by most. It was the best job in the world. One minute in the depths of a drug den, the next in Buckingham palace. Delivering babies and off to a cardiac arrest straight after. I decided however I wanted more.

In 2008, there was an opportunity to become a ranked Officer. I knew this was a jump of 2 ranks but I went for it. To my surprise I passed the exams and interviews and went onto train as an Acting Station Officer for the South West and West of London for a year on probation. In 2009, I passed my probationary year and became a substantive Station Officer for South East London and Central London based at HQ Waterloo and was placed on the talent management programme.

In this time, I attended various major incidents as a Bronze Officer and Incident Commander (Silver). This role was a mix, being the line manager to a large cohort of clinical staff whilst attending serious and major incidents both clinically and in an officer's capacity.

In 2013, alongside working as a Station Officer I volunteered to become part of a charity taking children with life limiting illnesses to Florida for 2 weeks. Providing these children with everlasting memories and a holiday of lifetime.





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I went there 4 times over 2 years whilst working full time in the LAS.

It was in 2014 that 5 years of going to the worst of the worst as a Paramedic and Station Officer, when I decided that I wanted to specialise in something more specific and a little calmer! I saw that back home in Gloucestershire there was an advert out for a Resuscitation Officers position. This was at a lower banding, but I felt that this opportunity would open provide a whole new career world for me and it certainly did. I applied and was successful and went from doing 12 hour shifts in one of the largest and busiest cities in the world to Mon-Fri in Gloucestershire! However, this development for me was brilliant.

The world of education opened up for me and I became an instructor and course director in Advanced Life Support and Advanced Paediatric Life Support for the Resuscitation Council (UK). I started to specialise within simulation based education and became the Simulation Co-ordinator.

A short while after this, I was given the opportunity to become the Resuscitation and Simulation Manager and combined the two roles and undertook a Post Graduate Certificate in Medical Education.

When the world of education was opened before me, my love to impart knowledge

encouraged me to open the same world to others and hence in my spare time I teach Pre-Hospital Paediatric Life Support for the military and have worked as a Clinical Field Educator and participated in Resuscitation Masterclasses in Europe. I started to privately teach regulated First Aid qualifications and also started the scheme of CPR4Schools; this is putting together a band of healthcare professionals to teach children CPR for free.

My love of simulation based education grew and I am now on the HEE South West Simulation Executive Board. In 2019, I was put forward by my line manager for the ADP and through this was made aware of the position of Head of Professional Education Apprentices and Careers Team.

I applied and this is now my current role. I love it!! I am still a registered Paramedic and keep my clinical skills up to date by working privately. I will never lose the Paramedic within and being an AHP in a Leadership role within a hospital is wonderful.

Promoting inter-professional working, the collaboration of various health care professionals and working with my two amazingly hard working, creative and inspirational teams is a blessing. **This is certainly not a career path I had originally planned, but I wouldn't change it for the world.**

