

BECOMING AN ADVANCED CLINICAL PRACTITIONER - REAL LIFE STORY

Showcasing different roles through apprenticeships



Gareth Ward, ACP paramedic apprentice
Primary Care

1 How did you get into your current role?

I began my career working as a support worker working with adults with learning difficulties. I wanted to be a paramedic from an early age but knew it would be good to gain some life experience first. I liked the quick thinking and autonomy of being a paramedic and making snap decisions in difficult environments.

2 What education/training did you receive prior to starting your Level 7 apprenticeship?

I went to Bournemouth University in 2009 – 2011 and got my foundation degree in Paramedic Science. I worked in Bournemouth for a few years in various roles including placement educator which involved training other clinical staff and mentoring. 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.

3 What does a typical day look like for you?

A typical day as an ACP paramedic apprentice involves seeing 30 patients in 12.5 minute slots for same day appointments. This can range from coughs and colds through to abdominal pain and chest pains. Working at an Advanced Practice level I am able 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!

4 What challenges have you faced so far?

The challenges we face is high patient demand, with high patient expectations. Sometimes it can be challenging doing an in depth assessment in 12.5 minutes, especially with patients presenting with acute symptoms that may need admission. Also I haven't done my prescribing element of my course yet which means the GPs have to sign off all my scripts but I am due to do this module in September so will be great going forward.

5

What are you most proud of?

I am most proud of the fact that with dyslexia, I am still able to pass modules at masters level and I am in a position where I am championing a role of paramedic within primary care. I have recently set up an Advanced Clinical Practitioner Network in my area to enable peer support and training for local people and I am excited to see how this will progress. Every day is a learning day and I am fortunate enough to work with some excellent and knowledgeable clinicians.

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Where do you see yourself in the future?

The aim really is to finish my masters apprenticeship and then continue to champion the role of an Advanced Clinical Practitioner and try to get involved with things at National level.

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What advice do you have for people looking to do the same apprenticeship as you?

If you like responsibility, clinical autonomy and learning then 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 journey. You are well respected in the clinical team and you can work within primary care, or secondary care or a bit of both!

To be able to work within the challenges of primary care, you have to be a very effective communicator in order to get your precise history quickly, to then be able to make quick thinking decisions whilst not anchoring on a diagnosis but importantly knowing 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 working in primary care, It's also important to accept that you may not know everything, but there are lots of people and specialities here to help!

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