



MEET THE CHAIR

PARAMEDIC TRAILBLAZER

We spoke with Carol Offer, North West Ambulance NHS Trust who is chair of the Paramedic Apprenticeship Trailblazer group.

So, Carol, please tell us a bit about your day job?

I am the Assistant Director for Workforce Development at North West Ambulance NHS Trust (NWAS), so all aspects of ambulance education within our Trust sits within my teams. I am absolutely committed to supporting the educational development of our workforce and the apprenticeships have really allowed us to support our staff. We are an employer provider and deliver two apprenticeships as part of the induction and development of new staff.

Why did you step up to be chair of the Paramedic Trailblazer?

I was the chair of the National Education Network for Ambulance Services (NENAS) at the time that the previous trailblazer chair left and I stepped in to fill the gap initially, but kept the lead role for this as the agenda really interested me.

The standard has now been approved for delivery. Congratulations.

Looking back what were the challenges?

We had to be challenged on how the apprentices would evidence some of our suggested behaviours and it makes you think differently about how you describe the paramedic role. You need to be open to that challenge. Recognise that the policies are evolving, and for the better, as the Institute learns from the experiences. The move of our standard towards an integrated EPA coincided with some Institute changes, we now have an outcome of an aligned, integrated degree which is the right solution for our apprentices.

And what achievements are you most proud of?

We are really fortunate as a sector that there are only 10 English Ambulance Trusts and that we already have a very strong education network which also includes the devolved nations and the Channel Islands. We work as a sector to standardise and harmonise our education as much as possible, so this was a natural step for us. We are able to include all 10 English Trusts in the trailblazer group.

We were able to carry out a national tender process to identify our pool of suitable university providers; Ambulance Trusts then partnered locally for a second stage local evaluation prior to selection. We have been able to put ourselves as employers in the driving seat for the delivery of this apprenticeship.

Do you have any tips for other Trailblazer chairs?

Use the support of the Institute for Apprenticeships and Skills for Health, this has been absolutely crucial for us; we commenced the re-write for an integrated degree just as Covid hit and with the support from Skills for Health we were able to keep this moving forward.

The Institute and Skills for Health were also key in enabling me to get up to speed when I took the trailblazer chair role.

The apprenticeship already has starts. How does the apprenticeship work in Ambulance Trusts?

Ambulance Trusts already have a model for supporting existing ambulance staff to become paramedics and this forms part of the ambulance trust workforce plans; they will now use the apprenticeship as the delivery model.

Our workforce plans account for the fact that a number of existing ambulance staff will become student paramedics and will be undertaking a programme to become a paramedic which will include scheduled days attending university.

How has Covid 19 impacted the apprenticeship?

Many Trusts have been delayed in commencing their first cohorts of paramedic apprentices, but paramedic apprentices have started on programmes in some Trusts and starts are continuing over the next 6 months.

"We are supporting each other to implement the apprenticeship across all the ambulance trusts."



[Click here](https://haso.skillsforhealth.org.uk/) to download the Paramedic standard and end-point assessment plan.